

Who Needs Friends?

Lithuania, China, Israel. Simply setting down the three words together stirs up trepidation — not only for the three countries and their people but for what is becoming of the American Government's sense of fidelity to principle and friendship.

Trepidation is really too tepid a word. It implies that we do not know what is going on and are just putting out some polite warning signals.

But we do know what is going on. In the cases of Lithuania and China, the Government of the United States has abandoned friends and principle. In the case of Israel, it is showing a dangerous movement toward doing so.

Lithuania is a small country. Its betrayal really does not take much telling. It tried to break out of the Soviet Union, the gulag of nations, by declaring again the independence it never agreed to surrender.

The Lithuanians had only one strength in the outside world. The U.S. was a firm backer of Lithuanian independence. For the half-century that the Lithuanian flag could not be hoisted in Lithuania, it flew over the Lithuanian legation in Washington.

Lithuanians did not ask the United States to send troops or do much except let Mikhail Gorbachev know that Washington backed them and would take it hard if he stood in their way with force of arms or force of economic strangulation.

So much for that dream. Washington switched to the Soviet side, at first with embarrassment. Now the U.S. openly joins Mr. Gorbachev's blackmail demands that Lithuania surrender by "suspending" its independence.

The usual phony stories were put out that the military would oust Mr. Gorbachev if the U.S. opposed him on Lithuania.

But it is not Soviet generals he fears. It is his disintegrating society. Lithuania free or Lithuania bound cannot save him from that.

And if Washington had stood up to Mr. Gorbachev he would not have canceled arms-control agreements that are to his economic benefit. Only fools would think he would act against his country's interests out of pique — or self-destructive foreigners looking into their mirrors.

In China, the United States not only turned its back on the cause of freedom almost immediately after the 1989 massacres but still stands looking away.

After a year of receiving nothing but contempt from Beijing as repayment for American betrayal of the student movement, the Administration is still fighting for the interests of the Communist Government.

Barbara Walters's report from Bei-

jing showed vividly that the Communist leadership would never again permit the Chinese people to mass in demonstration against Communist rule.

And what does the Administration do? It organizes pressure in Congress to continue China's tariff breaks on exports to the United States.

Members of Congress are besieged by American and Hong Kong businessmen who want to preserve China's tariff advantages. But they also hear from Chinese freedom leaders who plead to end them, saying the privileges help chiefly the Government in Beijing.

Next month, Congress must choose.

In the Middle East, the United States is behaving as if Israel, not the Arab states that have been trying to destroy her for 40 years, is the cause of all the trouble.

That is absolutely true — if you

Lithuania, China, Israel.

agree with the Arab states that Israel never had a right to exist.

Israeli "leaders" refuse to change the corrupt election system that keeps them in office and keeps the country in political chaos. For that, they all deserve the boot by their people.

Sad enough for Israel, but fixable. But now Washington is striking at the foundation of Israel's existence by pandering to the powerful Arab-organized campaign to block the movement of Soviet Jews to Israel.

From enemies of Israel that would be understandable. But the United States, which is supposed to be Israel's friend and ally, is playing the Arab game.

So is America's new favorite ally. Moscow and Washington denounce Israel for finding apartments for Soviet Jews in East Jerusalem — not in the Muslim or Christian old quarters but in new suburbs of the city that is Israel's capital.

That is questioning Israel's authority to fulfill its reason for existence — to provide a land to live in for those Jews who seek it.

Well, what does it matter that people and countries that thought we shared principles and friendship with them find out they were wrong? After all, the United States will never again need a friend or the world's trust. Isn't that right? □